

Atlanta: 3 officer-involved shootings in one week reviewed 5/7/07

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Even as local and federal investigations continue into the killing of an elderly woman by Atlanta police last November, the department now also must conduct its own review of three nonfatal shootings by Atlanta officers in one week.

The incidents — two on Wednesday and one April 28 — come as residents in several metro Atlanta communities are raising concerns about police shootings.

In Atlanta, the two shootings on Wednesday began with officers trying to pull over a vehicle.

A 15-year-old driver, stopped on Oak Drive by an officer who suspected the car was stolen, backed the car into the officer's leg, police said. The officer fired and struck the driver as he fled in the car.

Later that day, other Atlanta officers stopped a sport utility vehicle after receiving a report of shots fired from an SUV. Three men ran from the vehicle near Hardee Street and Mayson Avenue. One officer chased one of the men into woods. When the man reached into his waistband and turned toward the officer, the officer fired, police said.

Some police departments have policies limiting firing into vehicles, and a few limit or virtually ban foot pursuits. Neither situation is addressed in the use of force policy posted on the Atlanta department's Web site.

In the other recent incident, an officer shot a man on Memorial Drive on April 28. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution requested a copy of the police report on the shooting; it was not available last week.

Atlanta police have been heavily scrutinized since narcotics officers shot and killed 92-year-old Kathryn Johnston after breaking into her home Nov. 21.

Two officers have pleaded guilty to manslaughter, admitting they fabricated a story so a judge would give them a "no-knock" warrant to enter Johnston's home.

This year, metro Atlanta's highest profile shooting by police occurred April 15, when Fulton County officers shot two unarmed brothers outside a nightclub. Ron Pettaway was killed. His brother, Roy Pettaway III, who was wounded, has asked a judge to issue criminal warrants against two officers involved in the shootings.

The officers are on administrative leave pending the outcome of an investigation by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, the Fulton district attorney's office and Fulton police.

The Rev. Markel Hutchins, a local civil rights advocate, said police violated the brothers' civil rights.

Also this year, Clayton County and Acworth police have each shot and killed a suspect, and Gwinnett County police have fatally shot two suspects.

There have been no fatal shootings this year by DeKalb County police, who shot and killed 12 suspects last year. Activists and relatives of some of the slain suspects have staged protests and demanded an

independent investigation.

A special county grand jury is investigating those cases and DeKalb police use of force procedures and training.

Under a new procedure, DeKalb police Chief Terrell Bolton also has enlisted the GBI and federal Drug Enforcement Agency to send agents to the scenes of police shootings to observe investigations.

Atlanta city officials have created a civilian review board to monitor police, starting this fall, and some DeKalb activists have called for a similar board.

Staff writer Yolanda Rodriguez contributed to this article.

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